

February 21, 2017



Dear Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michelle Rivelli and I am a pediatrician in Shelton and I live in West Haven. I am testifying on behalf of my many patients with disabilities and my own young adult daughter who has autism and intellectual disability. **I am testifying because I continue to be appalled by Governor Malloy and the CT legislature holding hostage the lives of our family members with disabilities year after year by holding back vital, necessary services that ensure the safety and well-being of our family members.**

Most of my patients with intellectual disability are receiving minimal to no services through DDS. For those who have tried to apply or access services they are being told to "not bother" as there are no services to be had. They are given no information on supports of any type that may be available in the community, nor guidance on the transition process. Unfortunately, you will not hear from these people as they are so beaten down that when I suggest they contact their elected officials about their concerns they are too busy trying to survive to even make a call or send an e-mail. One father recently told me "why bother, I am constantly getting one door after another shut in my face". He has no confidence in his elected officials, nor does he have any hope for his son's future. This is not unusual. I hear this almost every time I work. The hopelessness and despair of our families is overwhelming to me and these are not people you will see up here in Hartford in numbers. They are the vulnerable families I serve and am here to give voice to. For these families, the only services they had been able to access in the past were Family Support Grants and Behavioral Support Services (formerly Voluntary Support Services). In many cases these services provided a necessary safety net to keep families safe by providing behavioral management in the home for individuals with significant aggression and self-injurious behavior. Already with fewer of these services, I have had more patients sitting in emergency rooms and in psychiatric facilities because families are unable to safely care for them alone. This is not only inhumane but in the end more costly financially.

Funding for day and employment services for new graduates also is an essential service for new graduates and their families. As the parent of a new graduate last year who did not receive funding initially after graduation, I understand first-hand the critical need to maintain structure and meaning in the daily lives of our disabled children. Once again, to hold these lives hostage while the state of CT "figures out" whether they can provide this essential funding is unconscionable. Families cannot struggle with this uncertainty every year. Come spring, I fill out numerous Family Medical Leave forms for parents who live with the uncertainty of if or when their now adult child will receive funding for day and employment supports or whether they will have to quit their job to provide the 24/7 care their family member needs.

I beg you—

Please restore funding for Day and Employment Supports!

Restore funding for Family Support Grants and Behavioral Support Services!

Support the Governor's proposal to invest \$3.8 million in the ID Partnership to help people on the DDS residential waiting list, support developing more residential options for people with I/DD and stabilize community supports.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rivelli, M.D., F.A.A.P.

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